



Chambers's Journal

SIXTH SERIES.

THE SILVER LOTAH.

By MAYNE LINDSAY.

IN FOUR PARTS.—PART I.



WHEN he retired from the 99th Bengal Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel Matthias discovered, a little to his astonishment, that he was still a young man. He was a bachelor and a sportsman; and these happy conditions of life had kept his eye clear and his muscles supple in spite of his eight-and-forty years. He did not enjoy the prospect of declining with a limited income to Bath or Cheltenham. He was in no mind to drag out an existence between the local club and the circulating library. Therefore he decided to remain in India until at least his hands should have lost the power to swing a gun to shoulder. With this object he rented a bungalow at Phulgarh—in the Eurasian quarter, because an unfortunate love-affair had stultified his concern in European society—and settled down to cultivate his rose-trees and inspect his gun-barrels. When the mood seized him or *khabbar* reached his ears, he gave his battery an extraordinary overhauling, and disappeared into the neighbouring jungles, to return with a bag that varied from a snipe to a tiger, according to the measure of his enterprise and good fortune.

Phulgarh is a little, lovely station on the borders of the Himalayas. It nestles at the foot of the mountains, on a plateau shut from the plains by a low rampart of crumbling hills to southward; and about it, elbowing the tea-plantations and the patches of cultivated land, and the tiny canals that irrigate the district, the forest of Timli stands sentinel. It borders the white road to the plains where it climbs over the Timli Pass; it covers the undulating tableland to east and west and north and south, and it runs up into the horse-shoe of the hills, and points a finger to the not-far-distant buffer states of the north. Colonel Matthias, looking from his veranda with the eye of the hunter, could see peaks and crags beyond

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the lower mountains that were far in the countries of the fighting tribes, in lands only trodden by sportsmen and politicals among Englishmen.

The cottage was a modest one; and its garden, full of roses and purple bougainvillæas and heavy-scented stephanotis, was not too large to allow a biscuit to be tossed from the dining-room table across the aloe-hedge into the road. The hum of life droned all day long through the open doors, and the bright dresses of the passers-by made a kaleidoscopic picture beneath the dazzling sky. Colonel Matthias, seeing and unseen, found diversion in watching the life that lay about him.

On one side of the bungalow an immensely thick bamboo-hedge shut out a house whose massive proportions, as they gleamed through the trees, made the little dovecot of Matthias look woefully mean and shrunken. A footpath bordered his garden and ran beside the hedge; and at evening, when he strolled upon it with the post-prandial cigar, the Colonel's thoughts not infrequently turned to what the screen might hide. The white-walled mansion—for it was little less—seemed to stand apart from the ramshackle half-caste dwellings about it; and in the silence that wrapped it, and the seclusion of its leafy defences, it showed a reserve that was uncommon in chattering, gossiping, piebald Phulgarh. In India, where all the world lives with open doors, and where the most intimate confidences take place in the open veranda, this attitude could not but excite interest. Colonel Matthias might be a hermit, but he was mortal. Curiosity was born.

There was little to learn from gossip, and less from what the public eye could see. The owner of the house was a Mrs Black, the native widow of an English contractor who had amassed money and died in the land of his exile. The reason for the isolation which she maintained, and the zeal with which her property was guarded from ob-

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servation, could only be surmised to exist in some chapter of her past career; to outward seeming her life was without present incident. She had two sons, one of whom, a weak-faced, delicate Eurasian, could occasionally be seen driving with his mother, or riding attended by a pair of heavily-armed sowars, in solitary dignity. Indeed, the constant care and observation expended by his mother and her servants upon this young man were among the details that piqued the Colonel's intelligence. Of the other son, beyond the fact of his existence, nothing was known.

Matthias's interest soon centred in Mrs Black. She drove out every afternoon amidst a clatter of retainers—plain Mrs Black might have been a Rani from the pomp and circumstance of her daily airing. She was a withered old woman, in native dress, and she was huddled into a bunch inside her clothes; but the face the Colonel saw was keenly alive, with restless black eyes that burnt like coals in their shrunken setting, and with all the traces of departed beauty. Matthias recognised by her features that she was not a down-country woman, but rather the daughter of some northern people—a princess, perhaps, of one of those turbulent races that swarm between the Empire and the outposts of the Czar. He gathered she was of noble birth from the manner in which she accepted service, and the obsequiousness with which her followers, her son included, proffered it. The contrast between the powerful face of the mother and the mild one of her son was remarkable; so, in a lesser degree, was the watchfulness and devotion with which she safeguarded him, and the timidity which, expressed in his every look and gesture, she appeared to foster by her jealous attitude. It seemed as if he were the object of far more than the ordinary solicitations which a widowed mother delights to shower upon her child, and which are, as a rule, removed by the growth of manhood and independence.

So much Matthias understood and conjectured. It was many months before the affairs of the white bungalow came to touch him more closely.

One evening, in the brief, incomparable after-glow of an Indian sunset, the Colonel, who had returned from tiger shooting in farther Timli, took his cheroot once more to the path beside the hedge. The air was balmy with the scent of the March roses, and a bulbul sang deliciously from the peach-tree against the house. Matthias, well fed and at peace with all mankind, wandered to and fro, and wondered as he paced whether the ways of Mrs Black and her mysterious *ménage* had altered in his absence.

His reverie was broken by a whisper—a murmur so gentle that at first he took it for the sighing of the bamboos, where their feathery crests swayed above his head. It was only when,

as if gathering strength in the twilight, it pronounced his name clearly to his ear that the Colonel paused to listen, and found the hidden speaker was beyond the hedge.

'Colonel Matthias! Colonel Matthias!'

'Yes!' said the Colonel, slanting his ear towards the bamboos. 'Who calls?'

'Hush,' said a woman's voice angrily. 'Not so loud.' There was a pause, and then: 'Do as I bid you, Colonel sahib. Bear with your full weight upon the hedge, thrusting the branches aside with your hands, and put your shoulder forward until you force an opening. Quick!'

The Colonel obeyed, wondering as he did so whether an intrigue were in contemplation, and if so, what imperious fair one could wish to force her uninvited company upon him. Then his pulses beat more quickly; the thought had flashed into his mind that he might be about to learn something of the riddle of his neighbour.

The hedge soon parted under his persuasion. A moment later he drew back quickly, for the figure of Mrs Black had pressed through from the other side, and stood, with glittering eyes fixed upon his face, at his elbow. She stepped on to the path, while the trees behind her snapped back into position.

The old woman was the first to recover herself from the shock of the encounter. She caught Matthias by the arm, lifting her withered face with sharp, bird-like glances to left and right, and pointed towards a summer-house that stood in the most secluded corner of the little garden.

'We are not likely to be observed there, I think,' she said in liquid Hindustani, through which the Colonel recognised a northern accent. 'You must forgive this strange proceeding, Colonel sahib. It is a matter of life and death. . . . Come.'

She darted to the summer-house, her white draperies sweeping swiftly over the open space that intervened, and dragging the Colonel in their wake in a mood of much bewilderment. There was something masterful in her manner, something against which he could not expostulate.

'I am glad I took this step,' said Mrs Black, seating herself in a dusky corner, and motioning to her companion to take his seat beside her. 'I am glad, because I have much knowledge of men, and I see in your eyes that you are to be trusted. It is well, for I come to open my confidence to you, and to beg your help against the great peril that encompasses my house.'

'If it is anything in which I can be of service'—began the Colonel. He saw her fevered eyes, and the deep lines that something besides age had cut in her face; and, having an inkling of what dark places might be in an Indian life, he was ready to pity the old woman—though, as he noticed, the initiative and the habit of command in which she indulged were not attitudes that made for compassion.

'It is,' interrupted Mrs Black quickly. 'You need not question that, Colonel sahib. I have not done this act without learning many things concerning you—things of which it would perhaps surprise you to know that any other person had knowledge. I know that you are secret, that you trust no woman with your mind, and that you are brave and generous. Will you listen to me now, for the hour grows late, and I may be missed?'

Colonel Matthias nodded. He was, as perhaps the old woman had foreseen, a little overcome by the preamble.

'Hear me, then.' Her fingers played with the gleaming jewels upon her wrists and clothing; her eyes were fixed upon the shadows that were creeping out of the evening.

'I am the daughter of a great Khan, who has reigned behind the mountains—there.' She dropped her bangles and pointed to where the pole-star hung above the Himalayas. 'He was the master of thousands of armed men who swarmed among the passes, and I, too, should have been their mistress when the time came, for I was his only child. But I was young—and beautiful—and the Englishman came: the first white man I had ever seen. They were about to marry me to my father's cousin, an old, evil man with a red-dyed beard, and with eyes as foul as a vulture's. I hated him. And the Englishman came: the first white man. . . . My father discovered it, and we fled, south and south again, pursued by his horsemen and his vengeance, until we were safe in India. There the Englishman married me, and so I am what you see—no Khan's daughter, but the white man's wife.

'It is not right for East and West to mate with each other. He thought only of amassing money; I was full of a great ambition, and I possessed that which, had he been ready to my wish, should have made him leader of my people. But he would not leave his money or risk a single hair. I could not go, for my father had laid a charge upon his people that they should kill me when I set foot beyond the border. That charge remains, and the tribesmen never forget.

'The years went by; we had two sons, and since my husband was no more than a *bannia*' (money-lender)—her lip curled—'I looked to them that they should succeed to my father's Khanate in place of their kinsman, Uzr Khan, who even now reaches out his hand and thinks he grasps it. Uzr Khan is a man—I grant it; but it is for my blood to hold the power he would usurp. So I looked to my sons.

'Nathoo was my first-born; and truly the powers of evil were present at his birth—dark-skinned child of Sheitan that he has always been. There is no wickedness that he does not know; there is no crime he would not commit; he

owns no authority but his own passions; and in chief his desire goes against his brother, Alan, since I named him as my heir, and drove the other, for his base actions, out of my gates. But Alan, though he is fair and amiable, is weak'— She broke off with a weary look, as if she were traversing old and well-worn ground.

'It is my will that Alan succeeds to my hopes, and it is my will that he shall sit upon the *gaddi* even as his grandfather before him. But there are many dangers in the way, and of these the greatest lies in the hatred of Nathoo. And now, Colonel sahib, listen intently, for I am about to tell you more than any one in India, outside my own people, could hope to learn.

'There exists a sacred vessel, the possession of which ensures to him who has the courage to plant himself upon the throne the leadership of my people in perpetuity for himself and his heirs. No one among the tribesmen but would acknowledge the man who, gaining my father's capital with the talisman in his hand, should hold it firmly and draw his sword to defend it and himself. It is sacred, Colonel sahib, to all my people; and not alone because it is the sign of authority, but because it holds a power that is wonderful, and beyond the understanding of men. When I fled from my father's kingdom I carried it—was it not my right?—and to this day Uzr sits upon the throne in fear, because he knows that when the one to whom I shall give it comes, Uzr Khan will be the Khan no longer. And it is Alan for whom it is destined—Alan who, when once the present danger is passed, shall ride to take his own, and sit in the seat of his forefathers!'

She sprang to her feet and swept on in a torrent of eager speech.

'Nathoo stands in the path; and in that I am an old woman and he is cunning and strong, I fear that he will do harm to his brother unless Alan is always in my care and in my sight. The road to the kingdom waits for the hoofs of the Khan's horse; and meanwhile danger bars the way. The house is full of eyes. I see Nathoo's wickedness everywhere, corrupting my servants, striving by craft and intrigue and subtlety to win possession of the sacred thing; threatening always the life of Alan, and the security of the trust I hold for him. . . . It warns me—ah! it warns me; but where is the use of warning to the eyes that are dim and to the brain that is feeble?'

'What is "it"?' asked the Colonel.

Mrs Black shrank back into the deeper shadows of the summer-house, and drew something out of the folds of her dress. She handed it to the Colonel with trembling fingers.

'It is here,' she said. 'Now do you understand my action? I know that Nathoo is near; that the danger threatens; and I come to you,

Colonel sahib, because you are a man to trust and to honour, to ask you to hold it in safe keeping in your strong hands until to-night—for I fear to-night—is over, and I come again to claim it.'

Colonel Matthias took it from her and looked. It was an old, battered silver lotah—a miniature of the drinking-vessel that is one of the commonest objects in India—very old, evidently, and studded sparsely with some dull, uncut rubies. It had an inscription chased upon it; and this the Colonel found to be in Persian, and read aloud:

'To see is to have power! Look, then, O King, and be warned.'

'Will you keep it for me?'

'But—but this is a treasure of antiquity, and I can see that it might well be a thing beyond price to those to whom it belongs. What a find for a curio-hunter! . . . How do you know that I am to be trusted with it?'

The old woman rose from her seat in the shadow. She caught Matthias's hands and pressed them tightly over the silver vase as she answered:

"To see is to have power!" she quoted. 'It

is enough for you, Colonel sahib, that I do know. You would not, perhaps, listen to me if I were to tell you how I get my knowledge. You would not understand, any more than you understand why I have thrust myself upon you to-night, or why I dread the dark hours that are coming upon me even now. Guard the silver lotah, Colonel sahib, as you would guard your own honour; and believe that I do not forget the man who helps me. And now—I go.'

The moon was beginning to creep above the night haze and the rose-hedges. The glimmer of its great yellow disc dazzled the Colonel's eyes as he turned to follow the old woman's sudden flight from the garden. She was gone before he had time to recover his sight. The rustle of her dress died away beyond the bamboos as they sprang behind her into their leafy wall, and only the distant voice of the city clamoured to the moonlight.

Colonel Matthias listened for a little while as if he thought that the woman might return; and then he walked slowly back to the bungalow, with sidelong glances at the shadows about him, and with his protecting hands encircling the silver lotah.

CUBA AS A FIELD FOR EMIGRATION.



HE magnificent development of Greater Britain during the last half of the present century has done much towards the consolidation of imperial power and prestige—that is, mere dominion has grown into empire, the outlying possessions of Great Britain's political yesterday being integral parts of the British Empire of to-day. This is all very grand in its way, but it calls to mind the homely old proverb that 'You cannot eat your pudding and have it too;' for the rapid development of our overseas dominions means the practical spoiling of them as fields for emigration, at any rate to anything like the extent that they were during the eighteenth century and the earlier decades of the nineteenth.

Of course Africa remains to us, with its future still before it. 'From the Cape to Cairo' is the shibboleth of British *fin de siècle* colonisation. But there we have an outlet for the future rather than the immediate present. To a large extent, Africa as a field for emigration in the ordinary sense of the term is potential rather than positive. To be explicit, at present it is a field for the energies of empire-builders rather than of mere everyday homestead-makers; the conditions require that one should be a pioneer first and a settler or colonist after. As a general proposition, the same applies to Borneo and New Guinea; and the average young Englishman or Scotsman,

with a few hundred pounds in his pocket and a superabundance of energy for the exercise of which there is no opportunity at home, is for the most part looking for some place that combines the advantages of, at least, partially settled social and political conditions, with those of material newness, where in reasonable peace and security he can build up a home for himself.

Of foreign countries—if we except China and the Far East—Chili holds out the most alluring prospects to the European emigrant. As a matter of fact, a number of Scotch colonies have been planted there. But whilst it would be impossible to overestimate the natural advantages of the great and progressive Pacific state as a field for European emigration, serious disadvantages are to be noted. The government is doubtless the most settled on the continent south of the Rio Grande; but this is offset by the brigandage and general lawlessness that prevail in the interior, whither colonists are invited. Magnify by a thousandfold the predial larceny that does so much to restrict agricultural industry in our own West Indian colony of Jamaica, add the elements of instinctive, unreasoning cupidity and wanton bloodthirstiness, and we have some conception of the conditions that militate against the otherwise matchless attractions of Chili.

But so narrow is this old world of ours now growing that, having said this, it is scarcely an

exaggeration to add that we have reviewed the general possibilities of emigration. Therefore, even the limited advantages that the great West Indian island of Cuba offers become worthy of attention; for, whilst under Spanish dominion the island was jealously guarded as a mere estate of the Crown, under American dominion or auspices—whatever the ultimate political arrangement may be—it is to all practical intents and purposes thrown open to the influx of capital and enterprise from all quarters. It is unfortunate that, under the circumstances, there are not greater openings for emigration. However, such as do exist are, for the reasons above set forth, worth the consideration which it is here proposed to give them.

The first part of the subject to claim our attention is the general condition of the island at present. The reversion of Cuba, after four centuries of European colonisation, to the status of a field for industrial settlement requires some notice. The explanation lies in the one word of portentous omen—war. Discussing the ethics of war in an article contributed to one of the leading American magazines, General H. M. Bengough, late Commander of the Forces in Jamaica, says: 'Those who admit most fully the horrors of war, the fierce passions it arouses, the devastation and misery that follow in its train, are those who have witnessed the gruesome sights of a battlefield after the battle, the fierce fight in the breach of a besieged town, the murderous slaughter in pursuit.' As a veteran soldier's view this is not bad, but it is too restricted. To catch the proper perspective of the horrors of war one needs to contemplate such a picture of desolation as that which Cuba now presents after thirty years of spasmodic warfare, terminating in three years of fierce conflict, during which the destruction of natural resources seems to have been the chief immediate objective of both sides.

As we are not discussing the abstract question, but merely its immediate bearing on our subject, it will be sufficient in this connection to quote the salient features of Cuba's condition as they are succinctly presented by Commissioner R. P. Porter in his official report to the United States Government. They are these: 'Population depleted, agriculture prostrate, industry destroyed, commerce devastated;' and for its rehabilitation the same authority suggests as a primary necessity 'that trinity of civilisation to dot the island—the home, the schoolhouse, and the church.' The lack of these great elements, he says, is the cause underlying all Cuba's ills. It is the primary object of the American administration to supply these wants, and begin at once the work of economic or industrial reconstruction, to do which immigration is one of the first necessities. This it is, briefly put, which renders Cuba to-day an attractive field for European emigrants possessing the essential equipment of intelligence, enterprise, and initial financial means.

Cuba possesses in a high degree the two fundamental bases of economic prosperity. In the first place, it is one of the most richly endowed countries in the world in natural resources. In the next place, it is within a short distance of the best and most profitable markets in the world. Yet under Spanish rule, with an area of over 42,000 square miles, or 28,000,000 acres, its splendid opportunities were but very partially utilised. According to the last census, in 1887, the entire population numbered but 1,521,684, of whom 1,032,435 were whites and the rest coloured. For this area and population the Spanish official statistics show that there were, before the war, 37,702 sugar, tobacco, and coffee plantations, farms, and cattle ranches, which were roughly valued at a little over £6,500,000. In 1862, six years before the first outbreak of the revolutionary struggle, Cabrera, a private authority, accounted for nearly twice as many, classifying them as follows: sugar plantations, 1528; tobacco, 11,541; coffee, 782; cotton, 35; cocoa, 18; cattle ranches, 6175; bee farms, 1731; stock farms, 2712; truck farms, 11,738; and produce farms, 27,748.

At the best, Cuban statistics are unreliable; but these figures may be taken as approximately correct. It is known that from time to time the population has fluctuated, showing remarkable decreases alternating with normal increases. At any rate, accepting the official figures, which indicate that before the late war the population numbered 1,500,000, and that there were altogether under 38,000 industrial enterprises, besides the native manufactures and mining concerns, we get a fair conception of the comparatively low degree of development reached under the repressive rule of Spain.

The native manufactures were limited to sugar and tobacco. As regards the former, it need here only be mentioned that the 2,000,000 acres of land under cane cultivation produced at the maximum output just one-half the entire cane-sugar product of the world, which indicates the latent possibilities of wealth in that direction when the normal conditions of the sugar-market shall have been restored, and the millions of Cuban acres not yet touched by the plough are utilised. Tobacco is the second leading industry in value, although occupying only a small area outside the great tobacco district of Pinar del Rio province. Previous to the war this province had a population of 36,000, and produced upwards of 65,000 bales of leaf, from which the world-famous Havana cigars were made. To-day the population is under 6000, and the tobacco produced averages under 6000 bales. The production of cigars being the island's chief manufacture next to sugar, the most striking illustration of the *déclat* of the war is to be found here. In 1889 the cigar output of the Havana *fabricas* was 300,000,000, valued at £2,700,000. In 1897, when the war was at its height, but before it had completed its

fell work of destruction, the output had dwindled to 123,000,000. The condition of the Pinar del Rio tobacco industry, as indicated by those figures, fairly represents the general industrial condition of the island, and fully justifies Commissioner Porter's sweeping summary, as above quoted.

But whilst exact in his presentment of the actual state to which Cuba has been reduced, and uncompromising in his denunciations of Spanish misrule, the Commissioner is fully impressed with the possibilities that lie before the island; and this it is that particularly interests us at present. He points out that the natural resources of Cuba are abundant to support a population of 10,000,000, while the estimated present population is under 1,000,000, some authorities placing it as low as 800,000. The project—if one will, the problem—before the Americans is, to begin at once the work of economic or industrial reconstruction; and in this connection the Commissioner appositely argues that 'there need be no opposition nor rivalry of different interests, as the strong and important industries, mostly agricultural, are of such a nature as to thrive at the same time.' Another important fact is, that 'the productive energy of Cuba and the fertility of the soil are so great that the process of accumulating capital will become rapid once the results of the war are over and a stable government is established. The rehabilitation may be slow for the people of Cuba, but by cordial co-operation it will be certain and permanent.' It is nevertheless acknowledged that the utter destruction and disorganisation brought about by the war 'will make the work of placing the island in a favourable economic condition costly and protracted, and many years must elapse before Cuba will take its rightful place in the economies of the world.'

Such are, in brief, the general conditions of the country that is now inviting to its shores the best elements of British as well as American emigration to revive and develop its great industries of sugar, tobacco, coffee, fruit, minerals, woods, and cattle; the value of at least the two first of these we have given.

The work of rehabilitation has been already commenced in earnest, and under what appear to be exceptional auspices. It is noted that since the war English capitalists have invested heavily in railways and other deals aggregating up to the present time over £13,000,000 in properties said to be intrinsically worth double the purchase-money. As an example of this, the representative of a large English syndicate has recently purchased thirty square miles in Pinar del Rio containing iron-mines. It is said that English capital is coming into Cuba in larger quantities than American, and now as a result it is common talk in Havana that 'the English are picking up all the best things going.'

It is to the small individual capitalist, however—himself a settler and home-maker—that Cuba

is looking for its industrial redemption; and here is the opportunity for the emigrant from the British Isles. It is the recognition of this fact that has given rise to the several American colonisation schemes that are on foot. As an example of these may be cited the Cuban Land and Steamship Company, the object of which is to encourage emigration of settlers. It is advertising to provide homes for settlers on an extensive tract of territory which has been acquired in the neighbourhood of Nuevitas, on the north coast, in the province of Puerto Principe. The natural resources are among the finest in Cuba, and the situation is commanding as regards the important condition of accessibility. The company proposes giving out the lands to colonists in lots of from three to forty acres. With such advantages offering, settlers of the most desirable type will doubtless be found in numbers when the conditions are made clear. The danger is, rather, that the American 'boom' system may supervene after a while.

Cuba, however, needs just as much another class of immigrant, which it is not so easy to procure. This is the wage-labourer, without whom no industry can be prosecuted. In his 'primary means suggested for reconstruction' Commissioner Porter mentions first the promotion of emigration of labourers, especially white Canary Islanders, for the tobacco plantations; secondary consideration being given to even the importation of cattle to replace the herds that were literally exterminated to feed the contending armies during the three years of active hostilities, and to the inducement of capital to come, from which the condition of the labour question in Cuba may be conjectured. But the crux of the question as presented does not lie in any inherent difficulty in supplying the labour-market, but with the American occupation itself. The half-starving negroes of the British West Indies would, under favourable inducements, be only too glad to emigrate to Cuba. Barbadoes alone might supply 200,000. The British negro, however, is wise in his generation, and prefers even the starvation of monarchical freedom to the long rope or swift bullet that are the salient characteristics of republican serfdom. So the Americans must seek some other solution of that problem. Probably between the Canary Islands and the Central and South American states a sufficient supply of labour emigration will be found.

Assuming this difficulty to be satisfactorily settled, we may return to our colonist immigrant. There are many openings for him, the choice of which would lie with the individual, and be determined by the factors of taste and means. As a general proposition it may be assumed that the majority would take up cane or tobacco cultivation. The latter is by far the more attractive as a calling, and remunerative as an

industry. But it requires more capital to start with, and as a primary essential of success the colonist would need the assistance of expert knowledge and experience. We cannot here enter into the details; but suffice it to say that it is a recognised fact that the successful cultivation of the finer grades of tobacco, from which alone large fortunes may be anticipated, is the result of a heaven-born instinct rather than an acquired art. It has been the unvarying experience of all foreigners engaging in Cuban tobacco cultivation that no length of experience could bring them success, but that at last as at first they were entirely dependent on the native experts.

The cane cultivator would, in any case, be more welcome, and would, moreover, receive ready encouragement and even direct assistance if needed from the great Sugar Centrals, where only, under the Cuban system, sugar is manufactured. The cultivation of the cane is carried on by planters on farms which are called locally *colonias*; the planters have nothing whatever to do with the manufacturing process, as they have under the British West Indian system, and can devote their attention and energies wholly to the production of the raw material. The result is seen in the pre-eminence of Cuban sugar. Thus, any one of average intelligence can take up the cultivation of cane successfully almost from the start.

Coffee and fruit growing would be the more immediately obvious alternatives to the foregoing, and in all cases the general surrounding conditions would be similar. But for specific details the prospective emigrant should make all inquiries before taking the final steps to go to Cuba. It would be very unwise to go without first having something like a clear idea of what he is going to do, and how he is to set about doing it.

Apart from the agricultural industries, there will be room in Cuba for immigrants of the artisan class of all sorts and conditions. In this connection it is, however, important to note what the American Commissioner has said on the subject. In his report occurs the following significant passage: 'There is little hope for industrial enterprise in the broader sense until the sanitary conditions are improved in the industrial centres. Yellow fever makes it dangerous for the unacclimatised, and the initiatory success of manufacturing depends on European and American skilled labour. This is a matter of prime interest to those looking towards Cuba with the idea of residence or investment, but is having special attention from the American authorities as being of paramount use.' Clearly, until these conditions have been radically altered—and much in that

direction has been accomplished during the past year—intending emigrants to Cuba should take care to avoid the cities.

Ever since the American occupation the newspapers have from time to time published more or less sensational accounts of the alleged popular discontent, the possibilities of troubles arising between the Cubans and Americans, and finally that brigandage is rampant throughout the country and is sure to spread and become an institution to an even greater extent than was the case during the Spanish domination. The truth is that there is little or nothing to be apprehended from these quarters. When not mere canards, the reports were grossly exaggerated. Before evacuating, the Spaniards perpetrated a sort of universal 'jail delivery,' and let loose for their conquerors the criminal accumulations of years. These people certainly need looking after, and they have been giving some trouble; but the Cubans as a whole are peaceable and industriously disposed, and desire nothing more earnestly than to secure permanent peace and prosperity for their war-wrecked country. This the overwhelming majority of them believe that the Americans can and will give them. It has also been sought by the sensationalists to make capital out of that indigenous West Indian *bête noir*, the colour question. If it ever existed in Cuba as a live issue, it has been practically obliterated by the conditions of the war since its first commencement in 1863. On the innumerable battlefields that were the stones in the fabric of Cuban independence, white, coloured, and black Cubans fought and bled together as brothers in arms for one common heroic purpose. In the mountain camp, in the forest retreat, on the dreary march, ill-clad and half-starved, it was the same thing. It is not in nature that the personal prejudice could survive that sort of thing; and as a matter of fact the best Cuban intelligence is unanimously of opinion that the question cannot possibly arise as a disturbing issue even under the impulse of the notorious antipathy of the Americans to the coloured race.

Be this as it may, the political future of Cuba may be taken as being fully assured; and we need go no farther than the neighbouring island of Jamaica to find a striking object-lesson of the possibilities of good government in this direction. There the colour question has been reduced to a purely academic one, albeit the blacks are in the preponderance of 600,000 to 14,000 whites. In Cuba, as we have seen, the coloured element was less than one-third of the population in 1887.



OUR LADY OF DELIVERANCE.

By JOHN OXENHAM.

CHAPTER XXI.



AS I drew near, however, a faint sound of music caught my ear, and leaving the front of the house, I went quietly along to the front terrace. The music was louder here, and the darkness was ribbed with narrow bars of light which streamed through the venetian shutters of the drawing-room, and across the yellow bars the rain fell like drops of liquid silver.

I stole close up, and smiled, in spite of my anxious mind, at sight of Hortense, whom I could only see in sections like parts of a child's puzzle, strumming away with the painful pertinacity of a beginner at *Parlant pour la Syrie*.

The poor old piano jangled and quavered under the torture, and I pitied it, remembering the slim white fingers slipping delicately over it the last time I heard it played.

Then I stole away and struck across the grass and through the dripping woods straight for Vaurel's house, and the only sound was the dismal plashing of the weir. I struck the path above the house and stepped cautiously downwards, for the wet leaves on the damp soil were slippery.

The little house was all dark, and there was no sound from it, but my nose caught a faint fragrant whiff of wood smoke which doubtless the rain bore down. I turned the corner cautiously, and in an instant, with nothing more than a preliminary snuffle, a pair of fiercely scrabbling paws were clawing their way up my chest, and a great blunt muzzle was working with eager snorts to fasten on to my throat.

'Boulot!' I gasped; and he dropped like a sack and grovelled abjectly at my feet, too much ashamed of himself even to greet me.

I bent and patted him, and he recovered sufficiently to rear himself up against the door to carry the good news to his master.

'*Holà!*' cried Vaurel from inside. 'Who is that?'

'It is I, Vaurel—Lamont.'

'Lamont!' and I heard the bed creak as he sprang up—'at last!'

He unbolted the door, and as I entered thrust a piece of paper among the ashes and lighted a candle.

'I began to think you had got drowned, monsieur; but I am mighty glad to see you.'

'We got blown out to sea in the gale, and only got back to St Nazaire to-day. I came on at once. Where is —?'

'He's all right. He's under there,' pointing with his foot to the other bed. 'But I've been

living on a powder magazine ever since I got back. No one knows I'm here but Louis Vard, and I'm aching to get away. When can we go, monsieur?'

'Now—at once; the sooner the better. The ship will be off the river-mouth by six o'clock. Where's the boat?'

'Sunk in the river where it was before. I had the devil's own job getting back without being seen.'

'I'm sure of it, Vaurel. I'm thankful to find you safe here, and him still with you. I've been fancying all kinds of things happening to you both.'

'Well, they very nearly did, all of them; but I'll tell you later. We must get to work at once, and, as you say, monsieur, the sooner we're away the better.'

'Well, what's to be done first?'

'We'll have to carry him through the woods to the boat. We can empty her when we get there, then in and away. It'll be pretty damp, but we can't help that.'

'It's damp anyhow. Have you any things to take with you?'

'They're all ready,' he said, kicking an old carpet-bag.

'How will we carry him?'

'Stretcher, as we did the other.'

He got a couple of long poles, of which there were always a number lying about outside, draped a blanket between them, secured it with half-a-dozen nails, and laid a dozen empty sacks on the top.

'We had the detectives round the very night I left,' he said as he worked; 'they nosed all over the Château and all round here. Good thing we were away, and that I'd left everything straight and clean up yonder; and, better still, they'd gone before I got back. Getting back *was* a fearful time!'

When we were ready Vaurel hauled Lepard out from under the bed, all ready trussed and gagged, and we placed him on the litter. Vaurel placed the carpet-bag under his knees and stamped out the handful of smouldering ashes. We then took up the poles, Vaurel slinging his in the loops of a rope round his neck, and passed out into the night.

He closed and locked the door, and we turned up the slippery path.

We had not gone a dozen yards, however, Boulot sneezing disgustfully at our heels, and still somewhat ashamed of himself for making such a mistake, when a voice just above us in the darkness said, '*Holà, messieurs!* and what have you got there?'

Lepard came to the ground with a bump as Vaurel loosed one end of his sling and dashed upwards at the speaker, and in a moment the two of them were rolling over and over among the wet leaves and bushes.

'Tie your handkerchief over his mouth,' panted Vaurel.

He was lying on the top of the other by this time, squeezing all the breath he could out of him. I tied a couple of knots in my handkerchief and held the stranger's wriggling head between my knees, but his mouth was closed tight and I could not get the gag in. Vaurel raised himself and came down on him with a plump which made him gasp. I slipped the gag in and tied it tight behind his neck.

'Now his feet,' panted Vaurel.

I got the rope he had been using for the litter and tied the man's feet.

'To the house,' said Vaurel, and we each took an arm and dragged him down the path, his bound heels making a big furrow in the soft earth.

Vaurel unlocked the door again, sought out some more rope, and we lashed him up like a mummy, laid him on the bed and locked him in, and then turned back up the path to our original enterprise.

'What will become of him, and who is he?' I said as we replaced Lepard and the sacks on the litter.

'Some dirty detective, I suppose,' said Vaurel; 'not a Cour-des-Comptes man, anyhow. I've thought several times some one was about. That's why I left Boulot outside. I thought at first it was Juliot. Glad it wasn't. We might get into trouble for handling a gendarme like that. We can say we thought this pig was a burglar.'

'And what will become of him?'

'Louis Vard may come down in a day or two. He brought me victuals twice this week; but it has been short commons, as he couldn't come often for fear of being seen.'

'If we get down the river all right we might send Louis a telegram from Redon or St Nazaire telling him to go to your house.'

'We can do that. For myself, I should let him starve a bit. Now, monsieur, there's the big house right before us. We bear round to the right, and the boat is in the little bend where it was before.'

We felt our way along the river-bank, stumbling and sprawling.

'It should be somewhere about here,' said Vaurel, and tripped over the rope and went headlong, letting the prisoner down once more with a bump.

'*Sacré nom-de-chien!*' he growled, 'there you are! *Eh, bien!* better so than not at all. Now, monsieur, help me to haul her in, and we'll get the water out of her.'

We drew the boat in by the rope as far as we could, and then waded out and hauled her up the sedgy bank, inch by inch, with the water running out astern, till I was able to get into her and bale her with my two hands, splashing out the water in sheets. Then we hauled her ashore, turned her over on her side, and let her drain.

'Any oars?' I asked.

'Lashed under the thwarts.'

In another ten minutes we were running down the river in mid-stream, both of us soaked to the skin, and in the best of spirits at the prosperous start we had made. Lepard lay in the bottom of the boat carefully covered with the blanket and empty sacks. Boulot sat on the top of the sacks and shivered abjectly at the proximity of the hated water, and when the dawn came I saw his eyes rolling in horror on finding how very near it was.

We spoke little on the journey, but once Vaurel sprang up with a big oath and a sounding slap of his hand against his leg.

'*Sapristi! sacristi! sacré nom-de-chien!*' he said. 'I've left the carpet-bag behind with all my things;' and he looked half-inclined to get out and go back.

'Too late now, my friend. Louis Vard will find them and take care of them, and we'll buy all you want at St Nazaire.'

'It was that stupid fool coming and interfering,' he said, and relapsed into gloomy silence over his loss.

We passed several villages lying back from the river-bank; but the inhabitants were all fast asleep, and no one troubled us. I took the sculls for the sake of the exercise and warmth, and it was just five o'clock when we caught the first swell of the sea; a quarter of an hour later we were past the outreaching arms of the land, and as the *Clutha* came stealing round a point to the south we headed straight for her.

CHAPTER XXII.—OVER THE SEAS.



AS the blunt nose of our boat rubbed gently up against the schooner's shining side, the sailors gazed down wonderingly at this strange carry-on, and evidently could make neither head nor tail of it.

The Colonel was quickly hoisted in and carried down to Macpherson's cabin. He was looking very much the worse for wear, and his eyes gleamed hatred and malice and cursed us with the curses which he would not allow his lips to utter. But the morning sun caused them to blink, which somewhat weakened the effect. Denise had retired to the saloon as soon as she saw that our voyage had been prosperous, and there she awaited us.

The Château boat was turned adrift and the schooner's nose pointed out to sea, and then I said to Vaurel:

'We'll both be the better of a change of clothes and something to eat and drink. Come down below, my friend, and I'll see how I can fit you out.'

Boulot lumbered down the companion in front of us, and from his excited snuffles I knew that he was paying his respects to Denise.

She stood waiting for us in the saloon, and came forward and kissed me warmly on both cheeks; she then turned to greet Vaurel with welcoming hands, her face alight with pleasure at the sight of him.

He stopped short in wide-eyed astonishment.

'*Comment*—ma'm'selle!' he gasped.

'But yes, Prudent, it is really me.'

He looked from one to the other of us, not understanding.

'But no longer ma'm'selle, my friend,' I said. 'Permit me to introduce you to my wife. Madame Lamont, this is Monsieur Prudent Vaurel, the most faithful and best of friends.'

'And I knew him before I had ever set eyes on you, my husband,' she said merrily, and wrung his big hand in both hers.

'Ah!' he said, still slightly dazed with surprise. 'And you never said a word of it, monsieur. Well, I could not have wished anything better for ma'm'selle.—He is a true man, ma'm'selle, and a brave one.'

'*Merci*!' we said together, and laughed at our unanimity.

'Monsieur has made very good use of his time,' said Vaurel slyly.

'I am quite of that opinion, my friend,' I said; 'and now let us to table, and you'll give us all your news.'

He was somewhat shy at first on sitting down to table with 'ma'm'selle,' but Denise very soon put him at his ease.

'We did not get away a minute too soon that first time, monsieur,' he said. 'There was a strange man came to the village that same night, and Louis Vard swore he was a detective. He nosed round everywhere and questioned every one, and next day he insisted on going over the Château, but he found nothing for all his nose was so sharp. They are hunting for Lepard high and low, I expect, and I should not be a bit surprised if the whole thing comes out without our doing another thing. It all depends on what his papers show, and if they can lay hands on them. When they can't find him they'll hunt for the papers, and if they are to be found, pff!' and he snapped his fingers to show what value he put on the Colonel if his papers were discovered and proved incriminatory.

'And where are we going now, monsieur?' he asked.

'We are going to St Nazaire first to send off

a telegram to Louis Vard and get you some clothes, and then we sail for New Caledonia, Prudent.'

'*Bien*!' he said. 'Boulot and I will go too. I have always thought I should like to go—as a visitor.—What do you say, my little Boulot?'

Boulot sneezed a hearty assent, and graciously accepted from Denise's fingers the thigh-bone of a fowl, which he bolted at two crunches, and then wrinkled up his brows, licked his lips, and blinked plaintively for more—plenty more—of the same kind. At the same time he glanced sheepishly at me out of the corners of his eyes, as much as to say, 'Say, old fellow, don't you go and give me away. It was a silly mistake to make, I confess; but, you see, it was dark and I'd been asleep, and it won't occur again.'

'I cleaned out the prisoner's cell before I left,' said Vaurel. 'I had asked Louis Vard to come down and give me a hand, and he nearly had a fit when he saw the Colonel; but when I explained matters to him he wanted to twist his neck. We tied him up, gagged him, and put him on a couch in the salon, with Boulot to look after him; then we set to work and straightened matters up all round, and left everything nice and tidy. But what a job it was getting back up that river! Coming down was easy enough, but going back against the stream—it was killing work. I waited in the bay here all day, hoping every minute to see you, and we had a pretty bad time of it, for it was rough here too. When it got dark I sculled back into the mouth of the river and as far up as I could get; then I went ashore, tied a rope round my waist, and towed the boat along. It was pretty rough travelling, I can tell you, for me at all events. For the Colonel it was easy enough. He went along like a prince and I his galley-slave. However, I swore a good deal, and received some bread at a cottage near the river, and we got on bit by bit. At places where there were bends and back-currents I could scull a bit, but it was mostly towing, and it took me till the next night to get in sight of the Château again. Then I had to hide the boat and leave Boulot in charge while I got Louis Vard to help. I lay in wait for him as he came home from the station, and we carried the Colonel up to my house. *Voilà tout*!'

'Ma'm'selle!—madame, I mean,' he broke out again, beaming all over his face, 'but it does my eyes good to see you looking so well and happy.'

'There is only one thing I want, Prudent, to make me perfectly happy, and that is'—

'Monsieur Gaston,' he broke in; 'and you shall have him, ma'm'selle. You shall have him back as sure as I sit here.'

We put in to St Nazaire as being the safer place from which to telegraph to Louis Vard, but only stopped there long enough for Vaurel and myself to go ashore and send off the telegram and buy such things as Vaurel needed; then

we turned the *Clutha's* nose to the west and felt our voyage fairly begun.

During the morning I paid a visit to the Colonel. He had been freed from his bonds, and was lying in his bunk very unhappy at the motion of the vessel; for we were crossing the Bay of Biscay, and the *Clutha* was showing us what she could do under the circumstances.

'Colonel Lepard,' I said, 'I have come to offer you one last chance. We are bound for New Caledonia to procure the release of Gaston des Comptes. There is still time for you to put us in possession of all the facts of the case. If you do so I will put you ashore—as soon as I have found them correct—in Spain or England, or on the African coast. If you won't speak you go with us, and we shall deal with you as seems best to us.'

I waited, but he would not speak. His back was towards me, and I saw him shudder as the yacht gave a sickening roll.

'Very well, then, you must take the consequences,' I said, and left him to his agonies.

The waves of Biscay played havoc with our new arrivals. Vaurel was turned many times inside out, and expressed new and voluble surprise on each occasion, but presently found his legs and took a new lease of life. Boulot curled himself into a tight coil in a corner of the saloon, and refused all offers of food, declining even to be spoken to till his stomach had adjusted itself to the motion of the ship. Then he got up, balanced himself tentatively on his bandy-legs, with his chin almost on the floor, tottered up on deck, sneezed many times at the nip of the keen salt air, and growled out a curse whenever a white-top came lashing over on to the deck. Then he went downstairs again and gently intimated to the steward that he was hungry, and that in default of legitimate satisfaction of his wants he would help himself, looking meaningly at the calves of the steward's trousers. Then when he had fared sumptuously he went on deck again and was immediately very sick, but after that he felt better.

CHAPTER XXIII.—HALF ROUND THE WORLD.

NCE out of the troublesome Bay we slipped rapidly down the Spanish coast and caught the North-east Trades soon after passing Teneriffe. Then we shut off steam and hoisted our wings, and found the *Clutha's* flight before the wind more to the liking of some of our passengers than her steaming had been.

Denise was by this time a seasoned sailor, and never had man a more delightful companion; and Vaurel and Boulot, as soon as they had found their sea-legs, took life very comfortably. It took Vaurel, indeed, many days to overcome his shyness at associating so intimately with the

lady of the Château; but this wore off by degrees before 'ma'm'selle's' grateful appreciation of all he had done for her and her house, and he settled down to the position of cabin passenger with considerable enjoyment.

Each day I visited the Colonel, but never once got a word from him. Even when he thought he was at the point of death from sea-sickness, the black jaw bristled with defiance and the heavy shoulders humped themselves sulkily against me. And I must confess that as the days passed I came to have something akin to a lurking admiration for this dogged steadfastness of purpose which kept the door tight locked upon him when a dozen words would have set him free. I wished most devoutly that his stubborn pride would give way and let him speak, so that we might release him to dree his weird as Providence might permit, for his being there was as bad as having a corpse on board, and our thoughts could never get far away from him. The confinement on shore and his sufferings at sea had told on him strongly, but he showed a spirit worthy of a better man and a better cause.

At first the discussions of the men as to who the Colonel was and why he was thus kept prisoner were endless, and it seemed to me advisable at last to put a stop to all the talk by telling them the simple truth.

I was pacing the deck one night after Denise had gone to bed, when, as I passed the forward companion which led to the men's quarters, a lively disputation on the subject of the Colonel caught my ear.

'He's the gal's father, I tell you,' said one gruff voice, 'and he wouldn't say yes, so they've tuk 'im along.'

'Her husband, maybe,' suggested another.

'Not a bit of it,' said the first. 'Mr Lamont's a gentleman, and he don't run away with no other man's wife, you bet. Why, it was him as got all that money for fishin' out a Yankee millionaire what tumbled overboard from the Cunarder. You remember—don't you? There was a lot o' talk about it at the time. My eyes! I wish I'd had the chance. Some folks has luck. He was first officer on the *Servia*, and 'ere 'e is a-sailin' 'is own yacht and takin' along the handsomest girl ever I set eyes on. It's her father, you bet; and he wouldn't say yes, so they've just tuk 'im along.'

'Are they right married?' asked another.

'In course they are. Why, you was there on the West Ind'man, and seed it all with your own eyes. And a bonny sight she was too. I never seed anything prettier in this world yet.'

'It may be all right what you're a-tellin' us, Jim Barrett; but you're on'y supposin' it. You don't know any more than the rest of us.'

'Oh, all right; if you know better'—

'I'm not sayin', mind you, but what you say may be right; but what I says is that you don't

know for sure any more than the rest of us. Anyhow, it's a darned rummy start to bring a man aboard like that, and keep him locked up in his cabin, and never let no one see him 'cept that 'airy Frenchman and the boss.'

'Well, you'll find out I'm right. He's Mrs Lamont's father, and he'd shut 'er up in a convent, so's Mr Lamont couldn't get at 'er. Then Mr Lamont he 'ooks 'er out o' the convent and marries 'er out of hand; and the old man wouldn't say yes, so they've brung 'im along; and they'll keep 'im tight till 'e does say yes, and then they'll let 'im go.'

'What's it matter 'im not sayin' yes, so long's they're married straight and proper?' said another.

'Ah, that's just where it is. In France you can't git married proper unless yer father and yer mother says yes; and so when the old man'—

'But they was married on the West Indi'man, you said. Bein' married on a West Indi'man ain't bein' married in France.'

'Silly! the gal's French—ain't she? And she couldn't git married proper unless her father said yes; and so they're holdin' 'im tight till he says it, then off he goes, and mercy bang and au revore.'

'Ah! I thought as how they weren't married proper,' said the former 'doubting Thomas.'

'Well, they will be as soon as the old man says the word; and, anyhow, it's his fault, not theirs.'

'What I says,' said another, 'is—has the cap'n of a ship the right to marry people right?'

'Better ask 'im next time you're on one.'

'Course he has,' said Jim. 'He's the right to string you up—hasn't he? And he's the right to bury you—hasn't he? Well then, it stands to reason he's the right to marry you too if he wants to.'

'I don't know,' said persevering Thomas. 'Stringin' up and buryin' of a man—why, that makes an end of 'im; but marryin' of a man's diffrent, and may lead to consequences'—

'There's many a man'd ha' bin glad if he'd bin strung up and buried afore he got married,' growled another, who had evidently had experiences.

Next day I caught our young friend Barrett alone, and asked him, 'What do the men think of our friend down below, Jim?'

'Who's that, sir?' he asked, colouring up.

'The Frenchman we keep locked up in Mr Macpherson's cabin.'

'Aw—um. Well, sir,' he said, shuffling about uneasily, 'they do say he's Mrs Lamont's father.'

'Dear me! And why do they suppose we treat him in that way?'

'Well, sir'—and he looked round both sides of me, but I stood square in front and left him no means of escape—'they do say, sir, that the old gentleman won't say yes to your marryin' the young lady, and you're agoin' to keep him tight till he does.'

I laughed out, which disconcerted him greatly.

'Well, now, Jim, I'm going to tell you the actual facts. It's no good having a mystery when there's no need for it. The man down below is a French officer. By fraud and trickery he caused Mrs Lamont's only brother to be transported to New Caledonia for treason and betrayal of War Office secrets. We know the facts, but cannot get hold of the proofs except through this man. Each day I have offered him his liberty if he will tell what he knows, but so far he will not speak. Until he does I hold him prisoner.'

'I'd jolly well screw his neck round, beggin' your pardon, sir.'

'I feel like that often enough, Jim. But, you see, I want him to speak, and if his neck was screwed round he couldn't speak.'

'That's so, sir. And may I tell the rest all about it, sir? They do talk now and again, and it puzzles 'em more'n a bit.'

'Yes, tell them by all means.'

I would have liked very much to hear Jim's discourse that night; but that could not be, and I had to leave our characters in his hands, believing that he would do us full justice.

The days passed pleasantly and restfully, for us at all events, who were free to revel in the fresh salt air and the glorious sunshine. For the prisoner below they must have been infinitely long and wearisome.

Never, surely, was there sweeter companion than Denise, my wife. Each day discovered fresh charms in her, new and delightful lights in her character, and depths of tenderness and sincerity which made me bless again and again the day on which I walked into the *Salon* and fell over head and ears in love with her portrait.

Now that we were really on our way to Gaston, whatever the issue of our adventure might be, her spirits were of the brightest, and her own vivid enjoyment of life irradiated a new joy of living on all around her. The men fairly worshipped her, and whenever she was on deck their eyes turned to her as naturally as flowers turn to the sun; and if by chance she spoke to one of them, he was a proud man for the rest of the day. They made up little jobs and errands that brought them within earshot of her lively chatter, and lingered long over them, and got grumbled at by their fellows for taking more than their fair share of enjoyment.

Lyle was, I could see, more than half in love with her himself, though his repressive Scotch nature kept his feelings hidden from any but a brother Scot.

As for Prudent Vaurel, he would have let her walk upon him or use him as a footstool at any hour of the day. Since she grew out of short frocks he had never seen her as she was now; for she was very happy both in the present and in her hopes of the future, and she saw no necessity for concealing it.

Even Boulot showed his enjoyment of her presence; and on the days that were fine and sunny, when the *Clutha* kept a fairly even keel and the objectionable water outside did not make itself too obtrusive, he would patrol the deck for a while by way of keeping himself fit, with the semblance of a solemn smile on his bunched-up face, and then settle himself comfortably on a bit of her skirt, and go off to sleep and dream dreams which set him whimpering with happiness—dreams maybe of strangling endless collies and taking murderers galore by the throat. Sometimes he would bark himself awake and find us all laughing at him, and then he would look foolish and with a snuffle of disgust curl himself up and go to sleep again, but always on the edge of Denise's skirts.

In fact, there was not a man on board who would not willingly have given his life for her at a moment's notice, except indeed that one down below in Macpherson's cabin, and him I had come to look upon no longer as a man but as a dumb devil.

Soon after leaving the Cape Verd Islands we had to take to steam again. We made a most prosperous and enjoyable run across the Atlantic, and struck the Brazilian coast just twelve days later; we then jogged quietly along, from Pernambuco to Bahia, from Bahia to Rio, from Rio to Buenos Ayres, encountering nothing but good weather till we came to round Cape Horn, and there we got it stiff and strong and bitterly cold, with mist and snow and blinding storms of sleet and rain.

However, we set our teeth to it, and groped and fought night and day, till at last we won through to the softer weather of the Pacific, and rejoiced once more in an even keel and the comfort of the sunshine.

We ran up the coast to Valparaiso, crammed our bunkers with every ounce of coal they could carry, and set off, under sail again, in the best of spirits for our eight thousand mile flight across the great waste of waters to the lovely farther islands.

All things prospered with us, and the men said it was because of the beauty and sweetness of the lady of the ship. And Denise was as happy as the days were long—wanting only one thing, and that we were striving to attain as fast as the winds would carry us. For both she and Vaurel were buoyed up with the sure and certain belief that our arrival at Noumea would, in some way or other, accomplish the release of Gaston, though how this was to be brought about they could neither of them say. Vaurel went even further, in moments of extreme exuberance, and expressed the belief that when we arrived we should find him already released and on his way home.

I fostered all their hopes, for it was better to be hopeful and happy than despondent and sad. But in my own mind, while hope was never absent, I could not attain to the assurance that they possessed, and wondered much and often what the end of it all would be, praying that it might be such as would satisfy to the full the desire of that sweet soul which was dearer to me than my own.

FAIR ISLE WOMEN AT HOME.

FAIR ISLE is a lonely little islet lying midway between Orkney and Shetland, with the tidal eddies of the Atlantic and the North Sea swirling ceaselessly round it. The men of the isle are fishermen, and in the vexed waters that surround their home they manage their slender skiffs with the utmost daring and dexterity. The women of the isle are the makers of the far-famed Fair Isle hosiery and other knitted goods.

Everybody who has seen and handled Shetland hand-knitted woollen goods is familiar with the rare fineness of the wool, the softness of the knitted articles, and the great warmth and comfort they afford. These articles—such as fine shawls, haps, shawls, vests, stockings, gloves, &c.—are usually all made of the wool in its natural colours; and some of these colours are very peculiar. In addition to white, black, gray, and brown, there is a tawny-brown colour called *moorit* in the local Norse dialect, which looks very rare and pretty in some articles, such as small haps. A peculiarity

has often been observed in connection with this colour, which ladies using Shetland goods should carefully note—namely, that *moorit*, when exposed for lengthened periods to strong light, especially sunlight, seems to fade and practically lose its colour; yet, strange to say, this rather startling state of things can easily be remedied. On observing the fading of colour, it is only necessary to hang up the *moorit* article in a wardrobe or any other dark place, and it will soon resume its former hue. There is also a colour known locally as *shaila*, which is a kind of grayish-brown, with a strange frosted appearance. These colours, even when seen in the wool on the backs of the small native sheep, are so unusual that people observing them for the first time can hardly believe they are the natural and permanent colours of the wool.

The tourist visiting Shetland, or the purchaser entering an emporium in the south where Shetland knitted goods are sold, is struck most forcibly at first sight by another class of goods quite different in appearance from those we have alluded to. The colours are brilliant, even garish;

and it is quite evident that artificial dyes have been used. The contrast is not confined to the colours only; for patterns on an entirely new system, in the variegated and fantastic hues, meet the eye. The startling brilliancy and variety of the hues, however, claim attention before there is time to notice the patterns carefully. These colours are bright yellow, brick-red, marine-blue, and white, with here and there touches of brown and green. The general patterns consist of diamonds and stripes. The diamonds are usually formed of yellow, red, blue, and white; the stripes of red and blue. Some of the diamonds are worked to resemble hour-glasses, and in others crosses appear. In a blue diamond may be seen a cross with two of its bars worked in yellow and the two other in white, and having a small centre-piece in red. On the two yellow bars are worked a few blue stitches, and on the two white bars a few red stitches; while on the same red centre-piece there are a few white stitches. In a yellow diamond may be seen a cross with two of its bars in blue and the other two in red, and with a little centre-piece in white; on the two blue bars are some yellow stitches, on the two red bars some white stitches, and on the little centre-piece in white a few red stitches. Other tints, like the brown and green already mentioned, show at times in touches.

To produce these varied and brilliant tints the Fair Islanders use different substances, chiefly flowers, roots, minerals, and seaweed. The yellow is obtained from flowers, especially the marigold; the blue is got from *lit* or indigo—the *lit*-pot in which the dye is prepared is to be seen in almost every house; the purple, yellowish or reddish brown, orange, and a brownish or blackish purple are all obtained from lichens of various kinds, scraped from the rocks on the seashore; and purple used to be obtained from *Lichen tartareus*. This purple is known by the local name of *korkeleit*; it was brought in considerable quantities from the lonely island of Foula, which lies several miles west of the most westerly point on the mainland of Shetland. The dye was to be had in the form of balls, and these went by the name of *kurki-baas* in the local dialect. A black dye, also made in the island of Foula, is prepared by steeping and boiling certain roots. The article one wishes to dye is put into the vessel used for the purpose, and while the liquid dye is still boiling, a handful of peat-earth of a black colour, containing iron ore, is also thrown in. The white is, of course, the natural colour of the wool.

The wool of the pure native Shetland sheep is generally compared to merino on account of its fine texture. Like the Shetland pony, the pure Shetland sheep is a small and very active creature, often to be seen moving with the swiftness and agility of a goat or chamois among the cliffs and crags of the shore. For the first few months the lambs live on the hill-pasture with their mothers;

but towards the close of summer they are taken in from the hill and tethered, usually in pairs, on the grass inside the dikes that separate the hill-pasture from the crofts. This is done to give them a better chance of standing the winter; but when bad weather really sets in they are shut up in snug and comfortable little folds every night, and regularly fed. In spring they are again allowed to run free on the hill-pasture.

The wool of the native sheep is not generally clipped or shorn. On the big farms, where Cheviot and blackfaced sheep are kept, shearing is, of course, the practice; but the Shetlanders leave the sheep's fleece intact till the wool is ripe, so to speak, and just about to come off of itself; then it is *rood* or pulled off carefully, so as not to hurt the creature, and any part of it that does not come off readily is left till later. The women card and spin the wool, and spend the long winter evenings knitting it by the light of the bright peat-fires on the hearths of their cosy cottages, while the rain and sleet, and perhaps the driving sea-spray, dash against the panes of the small window, and the wind roars down the stunted chimney of the low thatched roof.

The women of the Fair Isle, like the women living on the crofts all over Shetland, assist the men in most of the outdoor work. In the spring they help to delve the land, for tillage is usually done with the spade. In the early summer the men cut the peats, and then the women dry and cure them, and prepare them for winter fuel. In the autumn, too, the women are busy out of doors; they bind and carry in the sheaves of corn, and take up the potatoes. Their knitting goes on in the intervals of this work—sometimes it goes on at the same time; for when a woman is carrying peats or any other burden on her back she generally keeps her knitting-pins busy all the time.

The faces that are to be seen round the bright peat-fires in the Fair Isle are—like the faces to be seen round most peat-fires in Shetland—strongly Norse in type. Perhaps the big chair with its rounded top in use in the isle, made of a wooden frame with a wattled straw back, is an imperfect reminiscence of the old 'high-seat' of the Norsemen.

The question that most naturally occurs to one's mind in reference to the artistic industry in which the women of Fair Isle are engaged is: How did they learn the art of using all those brilliant hues and variegated patterns in their knitting? It has been stated that the Fair Isle colours and designs closely resemble those of Moorish origin still to be seen lingering in the dress worn by the fisher-people in the south of Spain; and this leads up to what is the generally accepted theory of the origin of Fair Isle work: that the arts of dyeing those bright colours and of forming the fantastic patterns were taught to the islanders by the sailors of a ship belonging to the great Armada, who were

shipwrecked there in that memorable year, 1588. Some of the natives of the isle, however, say that they owe their artistic industry to fugitive Covenanters who found an asylum in that lonely

spot—some of whom were weavers skilled in making the bright and variegated tartans worn by the Highland clans. The former theory, however, seems to be the stronger of the two.

A N E S C A P E.

THE Reverend Bryce-Ritson was beginning to fear that he had mistaken his profession—that he was too full of rude energy for the Church. Already he looked back with longing to the days when he rowed 'six' in the Magdalen boat; but here he was, curate in a small county town scarcely more than a village. Had it not been for that family living he might have gone in for the army. And what chances there were for getting ahead just now! Was it too late to change? He was only a deacon. The thought thrilled him. He was a round peg in a square hole. His vicar said 'Israyl' and 'Gard,' and committed other sins against his canon of taste. His bishop was unctuous and liked port wine.

Why were all these things pressing so heavily upon his spirit this particular Sunday afternoon? Well enough he knew the cause, but would not confess it even to himself. It was the same reason which had made his young lady-teachers so listless in Sunday-school—even Lily Hardinge.

Last Sunday young Turner had been one of his helpers, brought there, he felt certain, for the sake of Miss Hardinge. To-day young Turner was a volunteer, was going out to fight for the Empire, was a hero in the eyes of every girl in the town; and to-night he must robe himself and intone the service. How utterly insignificant he would feel! For young Turner would be there in his Yeomanry uniform; he would be envying him all through the function.

His spirit was in revolt. No one seemed to care now about Church matters, not even his young lady-helpers! Was he losing ground with Lily Hardinge? At bottom this was the thought which troubled him most. Was she, like the others, worshipping the soldier to the exclusion of the cleric?

Suppose matters politic got worse. Suppose America should interfere and the Continent take advantage! Suppose England fighting for her very existence! Who would care for the clergy and their work then? If it came to conscription his cloth would protect him; he would be sneered at as one sitting snug at home, and the soldier would—even more than at present—be the popular hero.

An abrupt knock at the door shattered his meditations; without waiting for permission a well-set fellow stepped into the room.

'Hullo, Ritson!'

It was young Turner transformed. What a difference a uniform seemed to make! How dare he address him so familiarly? He tried to put some reserve into his answering greeting; but the young fellow, taking no notice, dropped into a chair, exclaiming:

'I say, I'm glad I ain't a parson.'

'Why?'

'Oh, I don't know. You see, you fellows can't lend a hand; and—I'm glad to be rid of Church matters. I've been feeling that way for some time, and now I'm a soldier! I feel as if I'd escaped from prison. Pity you're a parson!'

The Reverend Bryce-Ritson began to feel absolutely ill as the young fellow rattled on, and it was by an effort that he managed to say, 'You must excuse me; I've my sermon to get ready—er—come again.'

Having thus got rid of his visitor, he retreated to his study and locked the door. What then happened may be left unwritten. Presently, emerging from seclusion, he re-entered his sitting-room and aimlessly took up the *Guardian*. A paragraph caught his eye; he gasped, staggered, and sat down. Then he read it through:

'The Bishop of Stamford, in his sermon yesterday, said that he saw no reason why young curates who were physically fit should not volunteer; he thought it would be a great help to them in gaining the confidence and respect of their parishioners.'

On the following Sunday the vicar announced that 'our much-respected curate, Mr Ritson, has felt obliged to give up his work here for a time.'

The frightful day was at last drawing to a close. Through the fierce heat the fight had raged, the wounded lying where they fell; many of them were now dead with thirst and horror. The terrible scorching sun was declining, and—at last—the enemy had been driven off. The Yeomanry troop, which had been the last of the supports hurried to the front, was retiring by the left, leaving the infantry in their sangars to hold the position gained, and leaving the battlefield to the surgeons and the ambulance corps. As they rode slowly along, the setting sun full in their bronzed faces, a Service Corps man hailed one of the troopers.

'Hi, there! Here's a man wants you. Fall out a minute, will yez?'

'Wants *me*?' said the trooper addressed, as, pulling his near rein, he fell out of line.

'Come this way,' said the other in reply.

A few yards off lay a man, evidently far gone. Trooper Ritson dismounted and went up to him.

'I—*thought* it was you—Mr Ritson!'

'What! Turner, my poor chap! Yes, it's I.'

'So—you came after all. I could swear to your face through all the tan.'

'I'm afraid you're badly hit.'

'Yes. Think so. Done for, I guess—and all through— Show him,' he said, turning his face to the ambulance-man, who, in answer, held out a leather case all bent and wrecked, containing the half-obliterated likeness of Lily Hardinge.

Ritson's hand involuntarily went to the breast-pocket of his tunic.

'What!' said the dying man, with a sharp glance and sickly smile. 'You too?'

'Yes,' stammered Ritson.

'If it hadn't been for that thing I might have escaped; it deflected the bullet and sent it through my chest. Been a Bible it would have been all right, I suppose—eh?'

'My poor chap! I'm *awfully* sorry.'

'Guess she sent us both here. Did you know that Lewson was after her?'

'What! That dealer?'

'Dealer? Jew millionaire!'

'I—didn't know.'

'Bet you she marries him—curse her!'

'*Don't*! Can I do anything for you?'

'Think not. But I'm glad we met. Don't you bother yourself about a'—

'Hush, old fellow, hush!'

'All right. Let's look at her, then. You've got one,' and he feebly pointed.

Ritson sheepishly drew a case from his pocket, and as he bent over the dying man they together looked on the girl who had flirted with both.

'Ah!' sighed Turner, 'not bad to look at—is she?'

'Now, Parker,' said a strange voice close behind them, 'get this chap on board the cart.'

It was one of the surgeons.

With a hand-clasp and a cheery, 'I'll see you again,' Ritson rode off to rejoin his troop.

Turner smiled grimly. 'I'm dying—ain't I, doctor?' he asked.

'Fraid so,' was the answer, curt but full of feeling.

For a brief moment, as Bryce-Ritson rode off, he triumphed. 'The road is clear; I'll win her yet.' Instantly he threw aside the thought. 'I *must* be a brute to think such a thing. Poor young Turner! I hope he may pull through; and she—can wait.'

It was not to be. When he found time to get to the hospital-tent Turner was already dead.

Three weeks later. Much had happened in the interval. There was a short period of rest for

the main army. It was mail-day; the cart had just driven in. Bryce-Ritson sat alone in his tent thinking. How much his ideas had broadened during the past three months! How often he had been in touch with death, especially during that half-hour at Klipfontein when they had saved the guns and, as reward, heard Bobs's 'Well done, Yeomanry!' How utterly apart he was for evermore from the Church! Now the hardest work was over and the war looked like ending, what was his future life to be? Could he remain a soldier? That was his desire; but he felt that as a private this would be impossible.

There was a step at the tent door, and Bell, his chum, came rushing in.

'Hurrah, Ritson! Good man! You're offered a commission for that Klipfontein business.'

'Commission? Klipfontein? Why, what did I do?'

'Ra—ats! But, by Jove! old chap, I congratulate you. And here—here's your mail—only a newspaper. I say, will you accept that commission?'

'Will I not! Thanks, old fellow, for your good wishes.'

'Well, so-long just now. Read your paper.'

Ritson opened it, and at once saw a marked paragraph announcing that Lily Hardinge had married Mathew Lewson.

He sat for a few moments staring at the notice; then, rising, he threw the paper down.

'What an escape!' he said.

As if with reluctance, he drew out her photograph and once more looked on the well-remembered face.

'I suppose you are no worse than other women: a mystery to the cleverest of us; and yet to me you were everything—so I thought. Well, dear, good-bye!' and tearing it across, he threw it from him.

'The army shall take her place,' he said; and his eyes kindled at the thought of the honour which had been done him.

SONNET.

THE dying leaves are drifting to and fro

Upon the fitful winds; the seas run high,

And, on the wet and glist'ning shore below,

Their crested waves are breaking angrily.

Across the sands, in reckless dance and mad,

The scattered leaves of yellow gorse are whirled,

Now here, now there, until, far o'er the sad

Gray waves, from human sight, at last they're hurled.

Out o'er the surf, with eerie, startled cries,

The seagulls take their lonely, wheeling flight.

Slow sinks the sun in stormy, purpled skies,

In golden splendour of tempestuous light,

And the dark shadow of its sombre wings,

The autumn night, o'er land and ocean flings.

M. C. C.